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# THE NEXT

**DIGITAL GAMING INDUSTRY:  
CEO INTERVIEW SERIES**

## **Volume 15:** We talk to Forever Network CEO Alex Sumsky

## **FOREVER NETWORK**

**Can you give us some insight into the genesis of Forever Network? How did it begin, and how has the business evolved since then?**

I often joke that Forever Network was born the day I realized how little traditional sports programming captured the essence of modern fandom. My co-founders and I grew up streaming our favorite teams, following player vlogs on YouTube, and debating on Reddit threads until 2 a.m. In that environment, linear TV highlights felt stale. We wanted a platform that had the flexibility—and the audacity—to mix sports with streetwear, music, memes, and the messy reality of fandom.

*A big turning point was when we realized our “superpower” lay in blending sports and culture, not just churning out stats or final scores.*

In the early days, we were a scrappy group of creatives working out of tiny offices and café corners. A big turning point was when we realized our “superpower” lay in blending sports and culture, not just churning out stats or final scores. Our first experiments were through mixtapes, artwork, micro-documentaries of local streetball legends, stories that lived beyond the box score. That’s when we saw how people rallied around the brand. Fast forward to now, we’re global, but we try to keep that underdog, creative spirit alive in every new piece of content, product, or partnership.

**Recently, we talked to a couple CEOs who created platforms for independent content creators. Forever Network takes the other route, hiring an extensive in-house content team. What are the opportunities and challenges with this approach?**

One of the biggest upsides is that our brand DNA remains consistent. Everyone in the content creation team lives and breathes Forever Network’s ethos. We don’t have to constantly explain our voice to external partners; the creative synergy happens in real time. It lets us innovate faster and continue to stay ahead of the hundreds of imposters that pop up every month. How we manage our in-house creative team puts pressure on our leadership to maintain a shared vision. Keeping a balance between creative autonomy and brand guidelines isn’t always easy. We want people to push boundaries, but we also want a cohesive brand story. Striking that balance has been one of our biggest learning curves but also one of our greatest sources of internal growth.

**Could you tell us about your social media strategy and how you’re utilizing various platforms to complement your own?**

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Our approach is platform-agnostic but audience-centric. In other words, we have a 'meeting people where they're at' philosophy to content distribution. A key priority for us this year is turning those social touchpoints into deeper relationships on our owned platforms. Whether it's an interactive animated market that funnels back to a parallel experience on VOAT or a talking heads format with a live experience that fans can engage with in real time through our platform, we're always thinking about how to bring fans closer to the core of the Forever Network experience. This is our biggest focus in 2025, with some exciting announcements coming shortly.

**Forever Network prides itself on matching the cultural tone of your audience. Who is your target demographic, and how are you tailoring content for them?**

Our audience is digital-first, aged roughly 18 to 35, and heavily influenced by the broader lifestyle ecosystem around sports, like fashion, music, gaming, and internet culture. We serve the teen who's making memes in their bedroom and the 30-something who's still obsessed with new jersey designs.

We build content that feels like it could appear in a group chat among friends (and quite often does). We always stay connected to subcultures: maybe that's the sneakerhead community or hip-hop scenes intersecting with basketball. By weaving in references that feel familiar, hyper-local, or sometimes globally recognized, we create an instant sense of belonging.

**In 2024, ComScore ranked Forever Network as 22nd in the media industry and 8th in sports. You're one of the fastest growing sports content brands in the world. How have you achieved such growth and what's been paramount to your success?**

Relentless experimentation. We run mini-tests on new content formats, track engagement like hawks, and scale up successes rapidly. We do a monthly audit of the bottom 10% performing content and quickly cull or optimise it. This has allowed us to achieve industry leading engagement rates. We've also focused on community-driven data, ie: listening to our audience through polls, direct messages, and even one-on-one online events. If we see that a certain segment is craving something, we pivot. Speed is our advantage. Being nimble, data-driven, and unafraid to fail publicly has fuelled our growth curve.

*Every single piece we aim to tell a deeper story that fans feel like they're a part of. That sense of inclusion fosters loyalty. We're not just broadcasting at them; we're creating with them.*

**What do you believe sets Forever Network apart from other sports media companies? You also have some of the highest engagement metrics. How do you drive engagement and attract more people?**

We deeply respect the ethos of digital citizenship. Many legacy outlets are used to a one-way broadcast approach; we believe in two-way dialogue. That's why fans feel personally invested. We are always creating for them. Every single piece we aim to tell a deeper story that fans feel like they're a part of. That sense of

inclusion fosters loyalty. We're not just broadcasting at them; we're creating with them. And when people feel ownership, they share your content more widely, and become hungry for what else you might have for them.

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**Now that Forever Network covers five major sports, could you talk about the performance metrics across each? Any plans to diversify into niche sports like tennis, MMA, or esports?**

Basketball is obviously our flagship vertical and our biggest engagement and reach driver. We span across 45+ countries, over 300M unique people and drove 7.5B impressions across Basketball Forever in 2024. Football (NFL) has become our fastest growing new sport last year eclipsing 1.4B impressions and another 1.5B divided across Baseball, Hockey and Soccer.

We have recently expanded into Cricket which is driving around 3-4M monthly impressions in India and weeks away from launching MMA. Esports has always been on the horizon and one we'd like to knock over in Q2 along with Tennis, Golf and several others.

**You launched a free-to-play game, VOAT, last year. What was the development process like, and how has it tracked since launch? How does gaming fit into your brand strategy?**

We wanted VOAT to be a natural extension of Forever Network's DNA. The goal was to build an interactive layer where fans could deepen their connection to our community. 2024 saw us reach our first 50,000 active players, and the feedback we've gathered has been pivotal in shaping our next steps. Specifically, we're in the process of transforming VOAT into a freemium experience that will eventually offer a more robust fantasy element.

*We see these products as another portal into the Forever Network ecosystem, encouraging fans to interact, compete, and connect in real time, all within our cultural and creative framework.*

By evolving VOAT's structure, we can enrich the ways fans engage, whether that's friendly competitions or deeper, season-long fantasy gameplay. Integrating games was always about extending our community's passion beyond passive content consumption; we see these products as another portal into the Forever Network ecosystem, encouraging fans to interact, compete, and connect in real time, all within our cultural and creative framework.

**With offerings spanning media/content, games, and betting tools, where do you see the biggest growth opportunity for Forever Network? How are you looking to expand?**

One of our biggest near-term focuses is Forever Fantasy, which will build on the momentum we've seen with VOAT. We want to create a fantasy sports experience that feels more immersive and culturally relevant. We wanted it to be less about spreadsheets and more about storytelling and community-driven competition. Think of it as a mash-up of traditional fantasy elements with Forever Network's style of interactive, visually engaging, and culturally aware content.

Beyond that, we're also preparing to introduce a new platform offering outside of the United States and Australia that'll allow our ROW fans to get even more involved in the action. We can't share all the details just yet, but it won't be your standard sports betting product; we see it as an opportunity to have real money offerings in the majority of our key markets.

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Overall, we believe the key to driving growth lies in the synergy between editorial content, games, and interactive tools. By making it fun, accessible, and culturally on-point, we're aiming to convert casual viewers into deeply engaged fans—and continue to expand as a truly global sports media and entertainment brand.

**What are your thoughts on the evolution of the media industry? How do you view the shift of newer demographics away from legacy media? And what's your long-term outlook?**

The biggest shift I see is the disappearance of gatekeepers. A teenage TikTok creator can rack up more views on a single highlight compilation than a big network gets on a Sunday evening special. Younger audiences are also less tolerant of inauthentic sponsorship placements and cookie-cutter commentary. In the long run, I think we'll see more niche communities blowing up in ways previously unimaginable. Forever Network's role is to serve as the connective tissue: bridging cultures, sports, and fandoms on a platform that values authenticity, speed, and interactivity. I believe the concept of a "media empire" is morphing into "media ecosystems," and that's a good thing for fans.

**When you're taking a step away from developing one of the top sports media brands, what do you like to do in your free time?**

Honestly, I have trouble not working, even in my so-called "free time," I'm absorbing every bit of content around me, from live sports broadcasts to Netflix series, trying to dissect what makes good storytelling tick. My brain doesn't really have an off switch, and I find that a lot of my best ideas come from the mundane moments like flipping through a magazine and getting inspired by the layout or reading a book and noticing how the dialogue flows.

Whether it's attending a live game, catching up on a new TV show, or simply scrolling through a new gaming app, I'm constantly thinking, "How does this engage its audience? What's the hook?" I guess you could say my leisure activities end up doubling as R&D. It's all raw material that eventually finds its way back into Forever Network, shaping new concepts, formats, or campaigns. The lines are definitely blurred, but I've found that blurring them actually fuels my creativity.



### **Alex Sumsky - Biography**

*Alex Sumsky is the founder and CEO of Forever Network, a pioneering digital media company behind Basketball Forever, Football Forever, and Hockey Forever. A Forbes 30 Under 30 lister with 12 years of experience, Sumsky has transformed Forever Network into an industry leader, leveraging innovation, storytelling, and strategic partnerships to engage millions of fans worldwide. A visionary in sports media, he has expanded the brand's reach into betting, fantasy sports, and interactive digital experiences, reshaping how fans consume and interact with sports content.*

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